

2005 Angler Opinion Survey  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Fisheries Division

In this survey, the term "bass" refers to smallmouth and largemouth bass.

1. How important is fishing to you in comparison to all of your other recreational activities?(Please check one)
- ☐ FISHING IS MY MOST IMPORTANT RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY.
- ☐ FISHING IS ONE OF THE MORE IMPORTANT RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES I PARTICIPATE IN.
- ☐ FISHING IS NO MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY OTHER OF MY RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.
- ☐ FISHING IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN MOST OF MY OTHER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.
- ☐ FISHING IS NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT TO ME AS A RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY.
2. Compared to the other fishing that you do, how important is fishing for bass? (Please check one)
- BASS FISHING IS...
- ☐ THE MOST IMPORTANT TYPE OF FISHING I DO.
- ☐ MORE IMPORTANT THAN MOST KINDS OF FISHING I DO.
- ☐ NO MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY OTHER TYPE OF FISHING I DO.
- ☐ LESS IMPORTANT THAN MOST OTHER TYPES OF FISHING I DO
- ☐ NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT TO ME
3. Please check any of the following fishing-related organizations that you have been a member of during the past three years (Check all that apply).
- ☐ I HAVE NOT BEEN A MEMBER OF A FISHING-RELATED ORGANIZATION IN THE LAST THREE YEARS
- ☐ B.A.S.S.
- ☐ MICHIGAN BASS FEDERATION
- ☐ MICHIGAN MUSKY ALLIANCE
- ☐ MICHIGAN STEELHEADERS
- ☐ MUCC
- ☐ NATIONAL BASS ANGLERS ASSOCIATION
- ☐ NORTH AMERICAN FISHING CLUB
- ☐ TROUT UNLIMITED
- ☐ LOCAL OR REGIONAL SPORTSMAN’S ORGANIZATION
- ☐ OTHER (PLEASE NAME): \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you own property on a lake in Michigan? ☐NO ☐YES
- If Yes, check the residence type:
- ☐NOT A RESIDENCE ☐PRIMARY RESIDENCE ☐RECREATIONAL (SEASONAL) RESIDENCE
5. Please circle the periods that you typically fish in Michigan (Consider all species).
- |     |     |     |     |                                       |                                      |      |      |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY 1ST TO<br>MEMORIAL DAY<br>WEEKEND | MEMORIAL DAY<br>WEEKEND TO<br>MAY 31 | JUNE | JULY | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
6. In 2004, on about how many days did you fish (for any species) in Michigan? (If none write "0")
- DAYS
7. About how many of those days did you fish for bass; that is, you selected methods, baits, location, etc. to increase your chances of catching bass? (If none write "0" and skip to item 12)
- DAYS
8. About what portion (percent) of the days you fished for bass in 2004 were on inland lakes or streams?
- PERCENT
9. About what portion (percent) of the days you fished for bass in 2004 were on Great Lakes waters?
- PERCENT
10. How many total organized bass fishing tournaments in Michigan did you participate in during 2003 and 2004 combined? (If none, write "0")
- TOURNAMENTS

11. During the season when it is legal to keep bass, what percent of the legal-sized bass that you catch do you usually *release*? (Please check one)
- ☐ LESS THAN 25%
  - ☐ 25 - 49%
  - ☐ 50 - 74%
  - ☐ 75 - 89%
  - ☐ 90 - 99%
  - ☐ 100%
12. THE REST OF THIS SURVEY CONCERNS BASS FISHING AND POSSIBLE BASS SEASON CHANGES IN MICHIGAN. IF YOU HAVE NO INTEREST IN THESE BASS ISSUES, PLEASE CHECK THE STATEMENT BELOW AND RETURN THIS SURVEY IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED.
- ☐ I HAVE NO INTEREST IN BASS MANAGEMENT IN MICHIGAN. (PLEASE RETURN THE SURVEY)
- ☐ I AM INTERESTED IN BASS MANAGEMENT IN MICHIGAN; (PLEASE CONTINUE WITH THE SURVEY)

**Should Bass Fishing Regulations be Consistent or Variable Statewide?**

*Consistent regulations:* It would be simpler to have one bass fishing regulation that fits all lakes in the state. Anglers would need to be aware of only a few rules and regulations. But a statewide regulation that adequately protects fish in one lake from over harvest may “overprotect” fish in another lake that do not need that much protection.

*Variable regulations:* Regulations could be more restrictive in lakes or regions where they are needed to protect the fisheries and less restrictive in other areas. This provides more flexibility and opportunity for anglers, but they would have to stay informed of the differences in regulations statewide if they fish in more than one area.

*The next 3 questions relate to the choice between consistent and variable regulations.*

Please consider the following two options and answer question 13 below:

- A. Provide consistent statewide regulations even though they may overprotect bass in some parts of Michigan in order to adequately protect bass in other lakes or regions.
  - B. Provide regulations that vary among lakes and regions to provide more fishing opportunity around the state even though regulations would be more complex for the angler.
13. Please indicate whether you prefer one of the above options more than the other by checking one of the following:
- ☐ I STRONGLY PREFER A MORE THAN B
  - ☐ I SOMEWHAT PREFER A MORE THAN B
  - ☐ I AM UNDECIDED
  - ☐ I SOMEWHAT PREFER B MORE THAN A
  - ☐ I STRONGLY PREFER B MORE THAN A

14. As it affects you and your own fishing opportunities, what is your opinion regarding the current level of statewide consistency in the Michigan bass fishing regulations? (Please check one.)
- Michigan bass fishing regulations
- ☐ need to be much more consistent statewide
  - ☐ need to be somewhat more consistent statewide
  - ☐ have about the right level of consistency and variability statewide
  - ☐ need to be somewhat more variable statewide
  - ☐ need to be much more variable statewide
  - ☐ I am undecided

15. How strongly would you approve or disapprove of having spring catch and release bass seasons only on certain Michigan lakes if fisheries biologists were confident that bass populations wouldn't be harmed?
- ☐ STRONGLY APPROVE

☐ APPROVE

☐ UNDECIDED

☐ DISAPPROVE

☐ STRONGLY DISAPPROVE

Please refer to the following information for the rest of the survey:

**“Harvest”**

- legal sized bass are kept by the angler for eating and/or trophies are not released back into the water.

**“Catch & Immediate Release” or “C& IR”**

- a bass is immediately returned back to the water once the hook is removed.

**“Catch and Delayed Release” or “C& DR”**

- a bass is kept alive for a period (e.g. in a live well) and released later.
- some anglers delay release of smaller bass until they catch a larger bass.
- during tournaments, anglers often delay release until after the bass are weighed and registered.

**How do Harvest and C& IR and C& DR impact the bass fishery?**

“Harvest” permanently removes bass. The size and number of bass removed are regulated to protect the fishery.

Research shows that most immediately released bass survive. However, nest destruction by other fish occurs when adult bass guarding the nests are removed even for a short time (immediately released). Thus, C & IR during spawning time (approximately late April-mid June in Michigan) may impact on bass populations in some lakes or streams.

Without proper handling, delayed release can kill more bass than immediate release. The greatest risk is to nests left unguarded when adult males cannot return quickly to protect them. When bass are released far from the nest site a much larger portion of nests are lost.

**Current preseason bass regulations:**

Except for select waters in Genesee, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oakland counties,

- the bass season does not open until the Saturday before Memorial Day in May.
- bass accidentally caught before the opener must be released immediately.
- it is **ILLEGAL** to intentionally try to catch a bass before the opener, even if you released it immediately.

16. Which best describes your understanding of the preseason bass regulation before reading the explanation above? Please check one:
- ☐ I KNEW IT WAS ILLEGAL TO FISH SPECIFICALLY FOR BASS BEFORE THE OPENER AND THAT ACCIDENTAL CATCHES HAD TO BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY.

☐ I THOUGHT IT WAS LEGAL TO TRY TO CATCH BASS BEFORE THE OPENER AS LONG, AS YOU RELEASED THEM IMMEDIATELY.

☐ I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE REGULATIONS WERE REGARDING FISHING FOR BASS BEFORE THE OPENER.

**Current bass season:**

On most Michigan waters, the current seasons allows fishing for bass from the Saturday before Memorial Day to December 31 (from 218 to 226 days); 5 bass of 14 inches can be kept each day.

Some legal catch and immediate release (C&IR) opportunity could be provided during spawning season if the impact on bass numbers was offset in some way.

17. How important is it to you to have a legal catch and immediate release (C& IR) bass season sometime in April and May before the legal harvest season opens? (Please check one)
- ☐ VERY IMPORTANT

☐ SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT

☐ SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT

☐ NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT
18. If a catch and immediate release (C& IR) bass season were opened in the spring before the regular bass season opened, would it affect the amount of fishing you do during that time? (Please check one)
- COMPARED TO THE NUMBER OF DAYS I USUALLY FISH DURING THAT PERIOD, I WOULD PROBABLY FISH...
- ☐ MANY MORE DAYS

☐ A FEW MORE DAYS

☐ ABOUT THE SAME

☐ I WOULD NOT FISH IN THAT PERIOD
19. How strongly would you approve or disapprove of a decision to keep the current harvest season and not add a legal catch and immediate release season?
- ☐ STRONGLY APPROVE

☐ APPROVE

☐ UNDECIDED

☐ DISAPPROVE

☐ STRONGLY DISAPPROVE

20. If an early catch and immediate release (C& IR) season of 4 to 5 weeks was opened, there are tradeoffs that would be necessary to offset the impact on bass populations. One possible tradeoff would be to delay start of the harvest season by 2 to 3 weeks after the Memorial Day Weekend.

a) How strongly would you approve or disapprove of delaying the harvest season in order to have a C& IR season as described above? (Please check one)

☐ STRONGLY  
APPROVE

☐ APPROVE

☐ UNDECIDED

☐ DISAPPROVE

☐ STRONGLY  
DISAPPROVE

b) How likely is it that you would still buy your annual fishing license if the above season changes were made? (Please check one)

☐ VERY  
LIKELY

☐ SOMEWHAT  
LIKELY

☐ UNDECIDED

☐ SOMEWHAT  
UNLIKELY

☐ VERY  
UNLIKELY

21. Bass season has traditionally opened on the Saturday before Memorial Day. How important is it to you that this traditional opening date be left unchanged? (Please check one)

☐ VERY IMPORTANT TO ME; I WOULD BE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO CHANGING IT

☐ SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT; I WOULD PREFER IT NOT BE CHANGED

☐ SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT; BUT CHANGING IT WOULD NOT BE A BIG DEAL

☐ NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT; I DON'T CARE WHETHER IT IS CHANGED

☐ I AM UNDECIDED

22. Another option for increasing bass fishing may be to extend harvest season into the winter months (January through March) for ice fishing. How would a winter season allowing the harvest of bass affect the enjoyment you derive from winter ice fishing? (Please check one)

☐ I DON'T ICE FISH

☐ ADD GREATLY TO MY WINTER ICE FISHING ENJOYMENT

☐ ADD SOMEWHAT TO MY WINTER ICE FISHING ENJOYMENT

☐ ADD SLIGHTLY TO MY WINTER ICE FISHING ENJOYMENT

☐ WOULD NOT AFFECT MY ENJOYMENT OF WINTER ICE FISHING

☐ UNDECIDED

23. How would a harvest season for bass in January through March most likely affect the amount of fishing you do in winter?

☐ I WOULD NOT  
FISH AT THIS TIME

☐ GREATLY  
INCREASE

☐ SOMEWHAT  
INCREASE

☐ SLIGHTLY  
INCREASE

☐ NO  
EFFECT

☐ UNDECIDED

24. Would you approve or disapprove of a proposal to delay the regular harvest season opener by 2 weeks in order to provide 10 weeks of winter harvest fishing for bass?

☐ STRONGLY  
APPROVE

☐ APPROVE

☐ UNDECIDED

☐ DISAPPROVE

☐ STRONGLY  
DISAPPROVE

**THANK YOU.** If you have any comments on Michigan's bass regulations, please write them in the space below. At the completion of this study, the results will be posted on the MDNR fisheries web page: <http://www.michigan.gov/dnr>.